

Honorable Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Kathy O'Neill and I am the Supervisor of the Parent Support Program with Association for Children's Mental Health; we work with families from Clinton Eaton Ingham County CMH. I am also the mother of 5 children 3 adopted and 2 with a Serious Emotional Disturbance.

I applaud you for the Autism bill; and think that it is very important. I wonder why Mental Health Treatment is not as important? 4 years ago I never knew that kids had mental health disorders; however today I assure you; that many families live with this; and do not receive adequate coverage or service for their children. We work with many families that do not have access to services; so their only option is to become involved in the Juvenile Justice or with Child Protective Services to gain access to treatment for their children. Is that really the message that we should be sending to families; that truly want and need help for their children? My children will continue to need services for the rest of their life...I ask myself what will happen to our family with out the services; I can assure you that I will be one of those parents in the Juvenile Justice System with my children or they would be placed in a residential facility; and that is not the path that I want to see for my children, nor should it be the path for any child with a Mental Health Disorder. I want them to be successful and able to do all of the things that other kids do; and they can with the proper treatment.

This bill affects all of the children in Michigan and we need to send a clear message that ALL KIDS
MATTER

Thank you